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COUNTY PROGRAM PLANNING  
OLD COUNTY

SITUATION AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Old County lies in a rich blackland area where cotton has long been the major cash crop. Of the forty thousand people in the county approximately half are rural and the other half urban. Negroes make up approximately one fourth of the total population and about one third of the rural population.

Six extension workers are employed in the county. Four white agents include the County Agricultural Agent, the Home Demonstration Agent, an Assistant Agricultural and an Assistant Home Demonstration Agent. A Negro county agent and a Negro demonstration agent are employed full time to work with the Negro population. Three of these six extension workers came to the county in 1951, two have been there less than a year, and the Negro county agent has been in the county for nine years.

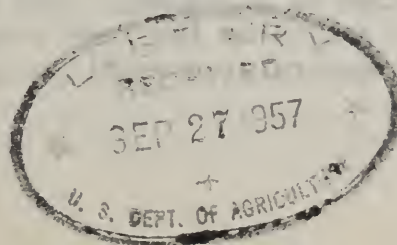
The county is divided into 41 separate communities or neighborhoods, according to the agents' annual reports. Organized white extension groups include 14 Home Demonstration clubs, a County Home Demonstration Council, 10 4-H Clubs, a County 4-H Council, 12 community organizations and a County Rural Improvement Association.

Negro extension organizations include 14 Home Demonstration clubs, a Negro Home Demonstration Council, 14 4-H Clubs for girls, 12 4-H Clubs for boys, 4 Community Agricultural Councils, and a Negro County Agricultural Council. Membership in the agricultural organizations is limited to men.

The philosophy of the extension workers can best be summed up in a statement by the county agent: "Program development, or program building, to include all of the people, men, women, boys, and girls, or the whole family, has been carried out to some extent in Old County the last two years." All agents seem conscious of the importance of involving as many of the people as possible in furnishing information about needs and interests in planning programs to help meet these needs.

PLANNING ORGANIZATIONS

The structure of the present planning organization is shown on the attached chart. In 1953, coordination of the Home Demonstration clubs, 4-H clubs, rural neighborhood improvement organizations, commodity and special interest groups resulted in the County Program Development Committee.





These groups are represented on the County Committee by officers, directors, or elected delegates. Some of the organizations were in existence when the present agents came to the county. These included the Seven-Step Cotton Committee one community organization, and several of the present 4-H and Home Demonstration groups.

Two thirds of the county is organized into community organizations with six other communities yet to be organized. The agents estimate that approximately 50 to 70% of the families in these communities actually participate in the activities of the organizations. These groups meet and do their own planning with little assistance of the agents.

Several other agencies have representation on the County Committee. These include the Bankers, Soil Conservation Service, P.M.A., F.H.A., and the Vocational Agricultural Teachers. Newspapers and radio stations are also represented.

Other agencies take part by offering information, and resources, by sponsoring certain projects, and by the interest and cooperation they show by attending meetings and in working with the Agricultural Extension Service and the farm people.

#### PARTICIPATION OF THE PEOPLE

Twelve out of a possible eighteen communities are organized into community groups which meet once or twice a month. Entire families come to these meetings which are occasionally attended by all agents. The agents state that from 50 to 70 percent of the families in each community are reached through these organizations. The communities are represented on the County Program Development Committee along with other extension organizations, commodity groups, and representatives of other agencies.

The communities not organized have representatives on the County Planning Committee, thus providing an opportunity for all communities to have a voice in planning extension agricultural programs for the county.

The county committee functions through a number of subcommittees dealing with various phases of agriculture, homemaking, and youth work. After discussion, the subcommittees agree on needs, suggest objectives, and recommend a course of action. A report is made to the County Committee by the chairman of each subcommittee. Final goals are determined by the county committee on a priority basis, and a report is made back to each individual committee.

Along with the needs and interests expressed by the people themselves the people were given up to date information from outlook material and materials prepared by State Extension Specialists. The background information seemed to be adequate and the discussion as to needs and interest was presented by the farm people themselves who served as chairmen of the separate subcommittees.

## PLANNING MEETINGS

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Program building to include all the people--men, women, boys, and girls, or the whole family has been carried on to some extent in the last two years. It has been built around the Rural Neighborhood Improvement Committees.

Program building in 1953 was carried a step further, to coordinate the program of the Home Demonstration clubs, 4-H clubs, and commodity and special groups. This now makes up the County Program Building Committee.

There were three County Program Building Committee meetings this year, nine community program building committee meetings, and ten commodity and special group meetings on program building. Long-time plans were made and immediate plans put into action.

The first and second meetings were used to evaluate progress and to initiate the planning in the various groups or committees. The second meeting was held to consider recommendations, decide priorities, and plan action to meet goals. At the third meeting the program was reviewed and approved. This was done after being reviewed and approved by the community, commodity, and special interest groups.

Needs and interests of the people were first discussed back in the communities by the community organizations, 4-H and Home Demonstration clubs, and by the commodity and special interest groups before being brought before the County Committee.

The county meetings were of one day's duration and were held in the fall of the year after the smaller meetings by special groups.

The community or neighborhood meetings are held several times during the year with assistance from the extension workers if it is desired. Commodity and special interest groups, home demonstration and 4-H planning meetings are held once or twice in the early fall before the county meeting. The number of times each group meets depends on the interests or problems of the group.

The County Committee is presided over by a farmer. Other officers include another farmer as vice chairman, a farm woman from one of the community organizations as secretary, and a Home Demonstration representative as program chairman. Four 4-H Club members represent farm youth on the County Committee. The total committee includes fourteen men, six women and four boys and girls.

Problems given major consideration by the local committees and adopted by the county group included continued emphasis on rural community development. They wanted the communities to be centers for educational programs in agriculture, homemaking and rural youth.

Problems came from subcommittees and special interest groups after discussion with the groups back in the community. There is evidence to show that much consideration was given to the problems before setting up definite goals.



## GOALS

In discussing needs, desires, problems and goals, the committees themselves recognize that providing additional information to the people about these problems would stimulate more people to do something that would better suit the people. Some of the first needs are listed under rural organization and leadership development, community and family life.

The people want to continue community development. They want the community centers to take the lead in agricultural and educational programs and to assist with safety, recreational, and health programs and other jobs where the people can help themselves.

The next group of goals come under the economic problems with respect to economic conditions, tenancy and public policy. They want to get information about owner-operator agreements and trends in this direction. Other needs include market information, conservation and improvement of soil and water.

The people also expressed a need for help in the following areas: Field crops, pasture improvement, home food supply, entomology, livestock, homestead improvement, and 4-H or youth work.

Next fall the program development committee will survey the situation and make further recommendations. If additional meetings need to be held they will be called to make further plans.

## EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Although the Old County Program Development Committee is a fairly new organization for program planning, evidence shows many strong features in the method presently used to get all the people interested in helping to set up an agricultural program for the county.

Some of the strong features seem to lie in the philosophy and attitudes of the agents in that they recognize the importance of including as many people as possible in determining needs and solutions to the problems relating to agriculture and the rural home. Great progress has been made toward this end by organizing two thirds of the county into community or neighborhood organizations where people are free to discover and discuss their own needs and work out some of their own problems.

Groups interested in agriculture, homemaking, and rural youth have done a good job in coordinating their programs for widespread interest and best results.

Although the Negroes are not a part of the present County Program Planning Committee, the white and Negro agents meet together regularly for conferences on joint problems and keep each other informed on progress being made. This is perhaps the first important step toward an integrated over-all total county program to include both groups. Because of racial differences and precedent, it may be undesirable to attempt a closer coordination of the two groups.



Some of the weak features of the program might lie in the limited participation of all the people in program planning. While much progress has been made in involving all rural families, it is felt that the county organization might benefit by including other agencies and groups, such as the Grange, Lions Club, Chamber of Commerce, and organizations other than extension groups. Membership could be increased and new people brought into the program by including on the County Committee representatives of all existing groups, such as the church, P.T.A., or social groups. If possible, the committee should include representatives from the Negro County Agricultural and Home Demonstration Councils or from the County Negro Program Development Committee when this organization is completed.

Some possible recommendations for further improvement might include the training of additional leaders to help with program planning among the community groups and a closer coordination of the Negro program with the white extension program at the county level, and an increased participation of the people by bringing in representatives of all agencies and existing groups.

Attachment







